

DEDICATED TO
COMRADES IN JAIL

for "These are they who came out of great tribulation."
—Revelation, 7-8.

Ye who keep the weary vigil, ye who know the dull
despair

Of a life encompassed by a prison bar,
Cheerless army toiling ever bowed beneath thy load
of care,

Pause and listen to a message from afar.

Think ye not ye are forgotten; in the watches of the
night

I am marching side by side with thee anew,
And, recalling tragic memory, I sit me down to write
Dedicating this, the humble work, to you.

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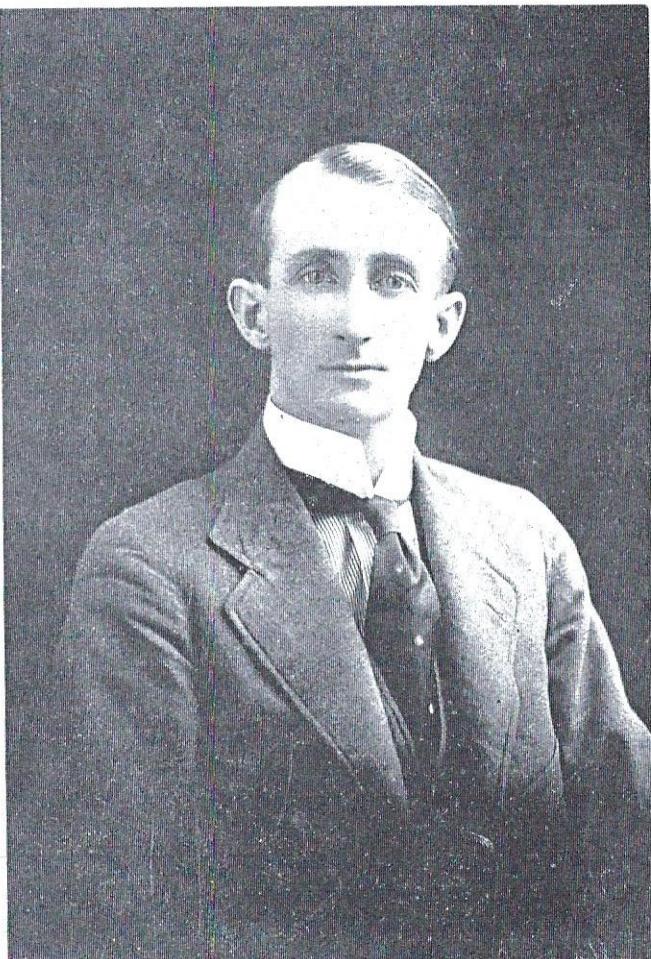
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*Yours for the Revolution
Dodge Marshall*

Foreword to Second Edition.

Many months, and weary months to me, have come and gone since the blurred, tired glare of midnight oil fell upon the scrawled MS. of "Jail from Within," yet it is only now that I learn of its sensational reception. Simultaneously with its appearance, I, for the second time, disappeared per medium of a prison van.

I was depressed when I pieced together my sad memories. The morbid recollection of prison was fresh in my mind, and ere I had gone far the shadows again closed in upon me.

With a more thorough grip of the position I come out of jail a second time a hundred times more emphatic in my denunciation of a system which serves only to crush the manhood out of man. The methods adopted degrade, demoralise, and—achieving their purpose—keep full the prisons.

It is only one who has passed through the innermost portals, who has seen the system beneath its golden braid, seen it naked and horrible, who can speak. Only I myself know—and, I suppose, care—how much I have suffered at the hands of the powers that be, but yet I am not vindictive. It is in sorrow, not in anger, that I write; in the interest of others, not of myself.

I wish "Jail from Within" to be read, because of the good that is to be done for the sad army in branded grey.

Jack London wrote of a certain book: "It will be

laughed at—some; jeered at—some; but most of all, worst of all, the most dangerous treatment it will receive is that of silence."

This little tale of tragedy has, I find, already been laughed at—some, jeered at—some; but I mind but little so long as it does not receive the treatment of silence.

Laugh at it, jeer at it, deride and denounce it as you will. But READ IT—that is the point—and perhaps there are some among you who will help me to fight the battle of a fallen brotherhood whom iron bars and stone walls will not allow to fight for themselves.

VANCE MARSHALL.

Sydney, 7th January, 1919.

Prelude.

With the smell of the jail fresh upon me I take up my pen to write these little narratives of the life that has been mine.

The tales that I am about to tell will possess none of the exaggerated embellishments of the orthodox "exposure." I do not urge them to be received as an exposure, but simply as a plain, unvarnished, first-hand depiction of that vague, shadowy form of existence so far removed from the lot of the ordinary mortal—life behind the bars of a prison. I desire only to draw aside the veil for a fleeting moment and reveal to those who care to follow me the tragedy and pathos of a hidden world.

And so I present to you this little record of my own jail experiences. I have nothing to gain in so doing; in fact, it may prove that I have much to lose. I have still my way to battle through life. The incarceration I suffered was due to open denunciation of the prevailing social system. Yet such system continues to exist, and upon its upholders I myself must rely for the privilege of continuing my own existence. A jail record is far from being an incentive to the extension of such privilege and, clearly, I must suffer by its advertisement.

Still further, my offence was the public expression of deep conviction. The treatment meted to me by the tyrannous powers that be has but served to weld the iron of bitterness more deeply into my soul. It must assert itself again, and still yet again. I have

been delivered into the hands of the minions of constituted authority once, and I cannot truthfully dwell upon my contact with them, save to their discredit. I may be delivered into their hands again, and experience, actual and tragic, assures me that they in their inherent vindictiveness will not forget.

I take the risk wittingly, but it is mine, and mine alone.

I refer to no authority in order to substantiate the grim truths which I am about to write. I simply recall what my eyes have seen, and in my own humble way trace the picture, dear reader, for you.

VANCE MARSHALL.

Sydney, May, 1918.

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The Arrest.

With bars they blur the gracious moon
And blind the goodly sun;
And they do well to hide their hell,
For in it things are done
That son of God nor son of man
Ever should look upon.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

At 2.30 of the afternoon of an October day I ended a customary Sunday stroll amid the flower-girt paths of the Sydney Botanical Gardens and turned my steps Domainwards. It was upon arrival at the spot at which I was to officiate in the capacity of chairman of the weekly Social Democratic open-air gathering that I was arrested. The enquiring crowd began to gather quickly, but the two plain-clothes men who fell in on either side of me gave little information.

"At Number Three Station," they said, "we will explain."

They were eager to get me away without the risk of a disturbance, and I assisted their efforts to do so with tactful submissiveness.

Arrived at the station, I was placed in the charge dock. A warrant issued by the Defence Department

was produced and drawled through, formally charging me with a breach of the War Precautions Act; to wit, the having given utterance upon a public platform to words apt to cause disaffection to His Majesty the King.

"Have you anything to say?" I was asked. But, like Brer Rabbit, I decided to "lay low and say nuthin'."

"Hold up your arms," brusquely ordered an officer, proceeding to relieve my pockets and person generally of everything to the minutest article.

"Take him away!" The words were uttered in a careless, matter of fact sort of way.

A moment later the overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and helplessness that comes to one with the clang of the heavy door of a prison cell was mine.

It took me several minutes to fully waken to a realisation of the situation and take stock of my new surroundings. The apartment was rather larger in size than that which I learned later to be the size of an average cell. It was evidently a place of detention designed for the accommodation of few or many unfortunates as a varying supply demanded. The walls were of stone, the floor of cement, and light was admitted through a barred ventilator set close beneath the high white-washed ceiling. The place was absolutely devoid of furniture in any shape or form. Against the further wall, and in direct line with the door, was an unscreened enamel sanitary pedestal.

Unnerved and oppressed I paced the limited space for what seemed to be an eternity. I heard six o'clock strike somewhere out in the city, and then the iron flap which covered a small opening set in the door for communication purposes was pushed roughly aside. The face of a plain-clothes officer appeared at the aperture, while, in the background, I could detect the presence of two other persons.

"Come up here!" reverberated a thunderous voice.

I stood closer to the door and was immediately assailed by a volley of questions and cross-questions, interspersed by a series of well-timed assertions. The questions were designed to extract information regarding my connections, political and industrial, and that of my acquaintances. The assertions, relevant and incriminating, were designed to shape my replies. The whole performance was a frenzied application of what is known as "the third degree"—the line of procedure invariably resorted to by the detective geniuses of to-day in order to secure the damnable species of evidence upon which they solely rely—"information received."

The trio wearied of my disinterested replies and left me.

Shortly afterwards the iron flap was again unplaced and a meal—supplied, I later learned, by friends outside—was pushed in to me. It was unaccompanied by knife, fork, or spoon.

The hours dragged away. I was nerve-shaken and weary, but had no place to rest, save upon the uninviting cement floor. I respected my clothing and continued the weary marching. The darkness came up, but the cell remained unlighted. From somewhere along the echoing passage there came occasionally the wailing of a female prisoner, followed by a gruff outburst of official abuse and lurid mandates of silence.

The door grated suddenly open, and a dim light broke in upon the mirk of my cell.

"The magistrate has come and will decide your bail, and your friends are waiting," said a policeman in almost friendly tones.

He led the way to an outer office where my coming was awaited. It was 9.15 p.m. Some moments later I had passed from out the walls of Darlinghurst Station seeking to throw off the oppressiveness which still gripped me and to forget the eerie cries of the wailing woman.

And so began my jail experience.

The Police Court.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day;
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey;
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

I had delivered myself from bail, and, seated at the rear of the dreary hall, awaited the calling of my case.

His Worship entered and passed solemnly to the canopied dais as the court arose with a heavy shuffling of large, official feet.

Without delay the business of the day began.

From his place in front of the judicial throne the clerk bawled the name which headed the list in his hand. At one side a sliding door opened noiselessly and furnished a fleeting glimpse of huddled beings.

“Thomas Henderson,” reiterated the officer who stood on guard.

Thomas Henderson entered with an alacrity hardly in keeping with his apparent weight of years, an alacrity which betokened an impelling force at his rear. The bar of the dock was raised and fell back into place behind him. The charge was chanted across

the room: “Thomas Henderson, you are charged with having been drunk and disorderly on the evening of the 12th instant. How do you plead; guilty or not guilty?”

Thomas Henderson raised his old, unkempt head and looked fearfully around. He returned his dull, pathetic gaze to the bench, and his lips seemed to mumble.

“Guilty, your Worship,” interpreted the uniformed representative of law and order at his shabby elbow.

A policeman stepped briskly into the witness-box, and in some dozen words told the tale of a gallant arrest. The magistrate scribbled a few lines on a paper before him.

“Fined five pounds or one month’s hard labor,” he said.

The sliding door re-opened and shut, and Thomas Henderson had passed from view.

Another name was called, and a girl was led forth from the outer enclosure. The charge against her was intoned—the soliciting of men in a public place.

She crumpled up before the stare of the many and sobbed convulsively.

Yes, she was guilty. No, she had nothing to say. She was a waitress, but there were so many others. Her father was a wharf laborer, but since the strike . . . and the rent kept coming round.

“Three months’ hard labor,” came the terrible voice, calm and impassive.

The business of the court proceeded swiftly.

A shabby little woman, flat-chested and middle-aged, responded to her name. Her drawn face and shapeless figure told of toil and child-bearing. She listened to the charge attentively, and the light of defiance died from out her eye.

“Guilty, yer Wushup,” she moaned pleadingly.

She had abused and assaulted a burly policeman. She had a “down” on the force. Her eldest son had been “pinched” a month before.

"Four months' hard labor"; and somewhere amid the standing throng behind me a child stifled its heart-broken little sob.

And so justice rattled on its course at the Central Police Court. Few and far between were the breaks in the monotonous order of things. At one time an ordinary "riotous" had dared to face them all untroublingly, and in clear, emphatic tones to plead "Not guilty."

"Put him back; put him back!" chorussed the court. "Put him back till later! Next case! Next case!"

And the alleged "riotous" who had dared to hamper the speedy dispensation of justice was jostled away.

Just previous to the midday recess I entered the dock to answer a charge of disaffection to His Majesty the King.

My case was adjourned, and my bail raised with a spitefulness born of fanaticism. Then I, too, passed out to take my place in that vilest of all hells, the detention coop of the Central Police Court.

Over the unextravagant amount of room space were spread some twenty or thirty individuals in a variety of attitudes. It was a Monday morning, and they represented the central city arrests for Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The apartment was absolutely devoid of seating accommodation, and the wall, shining with a horrible, mysterious coating of grease, was the only restful support of the hapless inmates.

The floor was coated with the phlegmy saliva of liquor-parched throats.

In a corner were set two exposed closet conveniences, and over one hung a man who vomited with racking violence.

An old derelict had taken possession of the only patch upon which a splash of sunlight fell through the barred grating above. He was engaged upon his toilet,

and had unwound and removed the offensive strips of rags which did service as socks. As they lay spread upon the battered footwear the spotlight glare of sunshine exaggerated the caked filth which lined their folds. He held open the breast of an aged shirt, and with dim, peering eyes sought the parasites which dwelt in its seams.

The whole atmosphere was nauseating and revolting.

In a hopeless heap against the wall crouched Thomas Henderson. Despair and grief were written all over his rugged features.

I lounged up with affected unconcern.

"Yes," he replied to my query. "Me fust time. Seventy-five year ole an' still learnin'. Learnin' I ain't no better'n a dorg."

He ruminated for a minute, then continued bitterly:

"If yer wasn't a dorg they'd give yer a chanst ter clean up. It stands ter reason a bloke ain't got no show in the court with three days' whiskers an' jail dirt on' im."

The lock grated harshly and the iron door swung open. A uniformed attendant entered and singled me out.

"The office is open," he said. "Come on."

And so I left them—left old Thomas Henderson crouching brokenly on the spit-strewn floor; left the wretched man in the corner vomiting into the exposed closet; left the battered derelict to continue his eternal searching; left the whole heart-rending, sordid daily tragedy of the detention coop behind me.

Leaving the World Behind.

I know not whether Laws be right
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in jail
Is that the walls are strong;
And that a day is like a year—
A year whose days are long.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The dismissal of my appeal against conviction was announced across the awesome space of the court with judicial pomp and majesty. A large, heavy hand, bordered by an official sleeve, glided from somewhere and gripped the shoulder of my coat. A voice, surfeited with artificial solemnity, chanted the next case, and I was drawn away—a convicted criminal.

Behind me a blurred, misty court proceeded with its automatic dispensation of justice; over me, dreadful and oppressive, hung the awfulness of my crime; and before me loomed the darksome walls and bars of a mysterious prison world.

Out in the sunshine the hum of the busy city continued with usual wont. The keen-faced office man brushed past in eager haste; the glad-eyed girl, radiant with summer finery, went her happy way; and the dawdling messenger boy gazed listlessly at the glaring maze of window displays.

Never had the everyday world seemed so entrancing to me as it did upon that summer morning as I, in

the keeping of two huge constables, with a mind filled with the mingled emotions of fierce resentment and almost pleasurable regret, trudged along the streets of the Sydney of my childhood.

Within the gloomy precincts of Darlinghurst Station my pockets were relieved of their total contents and, without ceremony, I was hustled away to "the yard."

Mention of "the yard" suggests walking space, resting space, air and sunshine, but the grim irony of the appellation is borne home upon one with a closer acquaintance. "The yard" is simply an ordinary cell save for the existence of a few iron bars in substitution of the small portion of the whitewashed ceiling.

It was still early in the day, in the vicinity of ten-thirty a.m., and I was the first of the Long Bay Penitentiary contingent to arrive.

Except for the inevitable sanitary pedestal, the more hideous because of its solitary conspicuousness, no article of furniture adorned "the yard." This studied lack of seating accommodation in such places leads one to assume that it is part of the system to accustom the unfortunate at the outset of his incarceration to the eternal pacing which must serve as his main diversion in the weary hours of solitude before him.

From the standpoint of cleanliness the floor and walls were far from inviting, but weariness and dejection overcame my scruples. I seated myself in a corner upon the well-tramped cement and sought to distract my thoughts from the vague possibilities of the future.

A pencilled inscription scrawled across the opposite wall attracted my attention. It was evidently the work of an under-world professional who believed whole-heartedly in the theory that, irrespective of when or where, it pays at all times to advertise. "Boys, when you get out go to Miss Lottie Beach's, 46 — Street, Paddington, for a good time," so it read.

At about twelve o'clock the sound of angry voices and struggling came drifting in from the outer passage.

The door was jerked noisily open. A man sprawled violently across the room and fell into a heap. Three uniformed men pushed in and glanced savagely at him, turned on their heels, and clashed and bolted the door.

My new companion slowly unwound himself and stood up.

"I tole 'em wot I thought, an' the cows put the boot inter me," he said by way of explanation.

He was a young fellow of about nineteen, and from somewhere beneath his mop of dark, wavy hair a little stream of blood was trickling. We had neither rag nor water, and he leaned over the closet till the plashing drip, drip, drip died away.

"The yard" now began to fill up quickly. Time after time the door swung open and batches of three and four were bundled in by eager hands without, while the general air of bustle and the monotonous grating of a score of bolts told that other pens were likewise receiving their quota of human cattle. Occasionally the shrill voice of a woman rang high above the droning din of the prison.

Owing to the disturbed state of mind which one generally experiences in anticipation of the ordeal of a court trial, I had eaten no breakfast that day, and, upon one occasion, as the door opened to swell our already overcrowded ranks, had enquired of the possibility of obtaining food.

"If yer lucky yer might get a bite at the Bay to-night," said the officer with brutal unconcern.

And so, hungry and depressed, I reseated myself upon the floor and listened to the subdued and broken conversation of my companions. Some had already been incarcerated for several months awaiting trial, and some were being returned to their cells at Long Bay to wait several months longer ere they would have an opportunity of disproving the allegations against them. Such mockery of justice is allowed by the all-powerful "system."

As the hours dragged past and "the yard" became more congested the atmosphere increased in vitiation. A vile, indescribable odor crept out of the now overtaxed sanitary convenience. Against one wall a long, gaunt, silent individual, with a flush on his cheeks which told its own terrible tale, coughed hoarsely and expectorated huge gobs of crimson-streaked saliva.

At half-past three in the afternoon we were lined up and our names called.

"Right turn. Quick march!" roared the voice of authority.

In the outer courtyard the prison tram, with its glazed windows and brand of "Special," awaited our coming. One by one we entered. Up one side of the car ran a narrow passage, and on to this opened a series of tiny, iron-grated cages, each containing seating accommodation for four prisoners. The one nearest to the entering platform was occupied by four females, and the youngest member of the group sought to hide a weeping face with the sleeve of her blouse.

Impelled from behind I stumbled into an apartment and six others with me. A scramble for seats ensued, and success attended the efforts of four. The place was not constructed to allow for standing room, and the surplus three literally piled themselves upon the laps of the others. The sound of shuffling disorder announced that overcrowding existed all along the line.

The doors were carefully padlocked by an officer, accompanied by an attendant armed with carbine and revolver.

The tram gave a lurch, and the noise of the great, unseen city was around us. No crack existed through which we might get a fleeting glimpse of the world we were leaving behind.

My companions on the whole were a well-dressed, intelligent-looking lot and, I learned in conversation, had been allotted various terms of imprisonment ranging to ten years.

Beside me, my first acquaintance of the day, he of the wavy hair, now tufted with dry blood, sat crushed against the wall in moody silence. He had deserted from the military. "Couldn't stick bein' bossed about like a kid," he told me.

A young fellow in clothes of fashionable cut had plunged on a certain big race. The "sure thing" had been "pipped on the post," so he said, and the till at the bank in which he toiled as teller showed an unaccountable discrepancy. It wasn't the few years' jail that troubled him—but after. Another, an elderly man, had been brought from a neighboring State charged with implication in the production of valueless notes. "The wife and kiddies" was the theme of his expressions of regret.

The most interesting and loquacious of all was a happy-mannered, bespectacled chemist and alleged adulterator of patent medicines. This gentleman protested his innocence with violent eloquence, and concluded with the sincere hope that God in His goodness would some day deliver the judge into his hands by way of a medical prescription.

There was also one of the number, a gallant lieutenant, to whose prowess, not upon the battlefield, but upon the domestic field, was due his unenviable position. He was a bigamist.

But our eagerness to query and condole was short-lived. At the back of each man's mind was the sorrowful realisation of his own sad lot.

By degrees we relapsed into dismal silence. The armed guard, parading up and down the narrow passage, glared in upon us through the barred partition.

The quiet spread from enclosure to enclosure as if by magic, and soon all that could be heard above the rumble of wheels was the muffled, girlish sobs of the weeping female prisoner.

And so we journeyed on towards the hidden prison world.

Criminals in the Making.

This, too, I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

With a protesting screech of brakes the prison tram lurched spasmodically to a standstill.

"Long Bay!" The whispered ejaculation passed from cage to cage.

The line of doors was unpadlocked and from out a mirky interior the car disgorged its human freight.

Dazed by the orders and counter-orders of an army of officials we stood fearfully in line, with our faces to the wall of the asphalt courtyard.

Somewhere behind us there came beating the rhythmic tread of marching feet and I dared to turn my head. A grey band of prisoners were swinging by. There was a falter in the stride of its members as they glanced furtively towards us. An oath rattled from the gang warder at their rear, and the regular tramp, tramp, tramp resounded till far down amidst the

spreading maze of barred fences, and walls, and compounds they passed from view.

In obedience to a gruff command we filed into the semi-darkness of the long narrow reception hall. The elderly, benevolent-looking individual in charge greeted us cheerily and addressed us as "lads." In an undertone I suggested to the man behind me that he was a "very decent sort of chap." But the man behind me had been there before.

"Decent!" he muttered scornfully. "Decent! Young feller, no man can be decent and be a jail warder—an' this ole cow is the worst of the whole bag o' tricks. Don't yer know 'oo 'e is? That's —, the hangman. Just you wait till 'e begins ter roar. I tell yer —" He broke off for the roaring had already commenced.

"Get inter them baths," was being shouted. "Quick an' lively! Chuck yer togs out 'ere an' put on the clobber wot's on the stool."

Eager to escape the surging flow of unwarranted wrath we obeyed with alacrity, and each entered the cubicle before him. With much dint of splashing our ablutions proceeded, and the gentle hangman fumed and fretted outside and glared at our naked bodies over the breast-high partitions. His importunate insistence accelerated our actions, and but few minutes elapsed before we had completed our toilets.

We emerged—but what a revolution in appearance! My companions had entered those tiny bath enclosures bearing the appearance of decently-dressed, respectable-looking, every-day citizens; they came out as criminals. There was a glass fixed upon the wall, and in turning I caught the reflection of myself—the most evil-looking blackguard of the whole lot.

Briefly I will describe the degrading apparel supplied to prisoners of His Majesty under the "humane" jail system of New South Wales; an attire in comparison with which a close-fitting guernseyed suit of broad arrows would rank as purple and fine linen.

The design and workmanship are execrable, and would disgrace a sewing-class of infants.

The jacket is made of drab-colored cloth, and its brevity is such that it barely reaches to the hips. A single trouser button fastens the neck close-pressed beneath the chin. The outside is devoid of pockets, but inside is stitched another piece of cloth to form a receptacle for towel and soap. On a staring circle of white canvas sewn over the left breast is branded the number of the prisoner, and a similar adornment occupies the middle of the back. Sometimes the sleeves succeed in passing beyond the finger tips, but more often end half-way betwixt the elbow and wrist.

The vest, or, better said, the bodice, stretches from throat to waist, and, unlike the jacket, is decorated with a veritable army of closely-set buttons. They, too, are of the trouser variety. In common with the jacket the bodice bears the canvas number brands both back and front.

The shirt is of coarse striped material, fitted with the inevitable trouser buttons, as is likewise the singlet of yellow, irritating flannelette. If a term of sentence is sufficiently long to warrant further disfigurement, these latter articles are stamped boldly both front and back with the number of the prisoner to whom they are allotted.

The trousers are made of rough holland, and supported by braces of like material. On the right-hand side is fitted a crudely-shaped pocket of insignificant holding capacity.

The hat is of coarse-woven straw, the shapeless socks of slaty-colored wool, and the ill-mated boots of the blucher persuasion.

The whole equipment is supplied at random, and is thus grotesquely ill-fitting. Seldom does any portion of it happen to be new. Each and every piece generally bears the frayed and stained tokens of years and years of grim service.

I was hungry. The day was creeping away, and I had eaten nothing. It was now 4.30 p.m. Food had been refused me at Darlinghurst Station, and from the muffled murmurs around me I learned that many of my fellow unfortunates had experienced like treatment.

With sudden clatter a large washing dish was thrust through the doorway, followed by a few spoons, tin dixies, and chunks of dry bread.

A voice from without bawled the one word, "Soup!"

A disorderly rush and scramble ensued, from which a few emerged triumphant with laden tins. There were not sufficient dixies or spoons to supply one-fifth of the number of hungry beings, but those who had failed to secure the implements of attack were nothing daunted. Jail hunger knows no law of decency. With bare hands they seized the huge, uncut, dripping leaves of cabbage and finger-raked the slimy, lukewarm depths for meat which did not exist. The settled dregs were scooped up on grease-smearred palms and plastered upon the remnants of bread till every crumb and particle were gone.

Again a volley of sharp commands assailed us.

Outside in the courtyard we stood to attention as the doctor passed along the line.

"Venereal cases, one step forward," he said.

One young fellow responded, and was directed to take his place at the end.

A large-girthed individual in civilian clothes now appeared upon the scene. An unwonted display of servile deference and an increased officiousness on the part of the warders showed plainly that he was the governor of the jail.

Unnerved and depressed by the racking events of the day we quailed before his angry gaze.

"Any first-timers?" he thundered.

A murmured affirmative passed down the ranks.

He eyed us up and down. "First-timers!" he roared. "First-time-caughters, you mean. Well, you're a bright-looking lot, I must say. If I was to win the whole bunch in a raffle there isn't one that I'd bother to cart across the street home. Lock 'em up! Lock 'em up!" And his elevating tirade ended.

It was almost 5 o'clock, and the hum and bustle of the prison day had long since ceased. As we marched towards the grey, gaunt line of halls and ranges the regular ring of our footsteps echoed eerily back from the labyrinth of deserted, iron-picketed yards.

On we went, each to his separate cell, pausing at the iron-bound doorway to pass in the bundled blankets and sanitary tub.

The iron doors and bolts clashed harshly, and into the hateful tomb and into our weary souls there crept through the grated ventilators above the shadows of night.

Initial Stages.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living death
Chokes up each grated screen;
And all, but lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

How those lines, memorised in days gone by, rang through my weary brain like a funeral dirge as the desolate hours of my first night in jail dragged their fitful course! How vividly it yet comes back to me—that eternity of wakefulness!

Naturally high strung and sensitive, the harassing events of the day reacted upon my mind to an extraordinary degree. In the awful darkness I tossed wretchedly upon the comfortless canvas hammock which sagged from its low-set hooks to the cement floor beneath. Save for the occasional pat, pat, pat of felt-shod feet as the ever-watching, ever-listening guard sneaked from post to post, the silence, soul-wracking in its intensity, was absolutely unbroken.

After an age of agony a tiny glimmer on the narrow grating above told that out over the forbidden world the moon had risen.

It was mid-summer, and the meagre cell space had slowly become a veritable furnace, the atmosphere

vitiated, stifling, choking. From their neighboring swamp haunts the mosquitoes drifted up in relentless droves as though seeking to increase the torment of that dreadful night. In despair I arose and seizing the threadbare cluster of blankets swished them violently to and fro above my head. The effort was fruitless of result, and the heat and the droning parasites remained.

When came a tiny patch of grey dawn light, with bedding long since folded, I was pacing the narrow limits of the floor. The coming of a new day, offering as it did but scanty hope for betterment, nevertheless seemed to drive the melancholy from my mind. I began to feel an interest in my surroundings. The type of dwelling place that was to be mine during the mysterious months ahead awakened my attention. Taking a careful survey of the cell I found it to be about fourteen feet in length and seven feet in width. I judged the whitewashed ceiling to be ten feet above the floor. The stone walls were painted a sombre-colored brown as though to obliterate the rub of tired shoulders. On the back of the huge sheet of solid steel which did service as a door was pasted a notice warning the inmate to keep the place in the highest state of scrupulous cleanliness and to refrain from defacing the furniture in the slightest degree. Mention of "furniture" naturally inclined me to take peculiar note of the articles referred to. In one corner was fixed a three-cornered shelf, which did service as a table, whose sole adornment was a quart-pot containing water. At the far end of the cell were piled in a heap a dustpan, a bannister broom, a highly polished tin dish, and a pair of shovel-like felt slippers. Beside the shelf-table was placed a wooden stool, which, in evident fear that it might possibly be moved to a more comfortable and unoccupied corner, was chained to the wall.

The only wall adornments were a typed list of the articles enumerated, a tag of coarse sanitary paper, and a much-thumbed booklet containing seventy-two pages, and marked "Jail Regulations and General

Orders. Applicable to both sexes except where otherwise provided." I took the volume from its place, and in the half light glanced through its pages. A clause caught my eye. It was rule 9, on page 7, and read as follows: "On hearing the cell door open the prisoner will stand at attention on the mark on the floor." This explained the mystery of a huge broad arrow painted upon the floor immediately in front of but well back from the doorway.

During the course of my imprisonment I occupied various cells, but the description here given applies to each and all.

I had barely completed my mental survey and inventory-taking when a clamorous outburst broke suddenly in upon the silence. It was the "get-up" gong. The prison day had officially begun.

Outside was a pandemonium of eager bustle. The warders, their silent footgear now replaced by heavy soled boots, tramped hastily over the echoing court-yards. I heard the faint jangle of keys and the grating shoot of a lock, followed by a sharp command. The sound was repeated again and again, but with increasing harshness and volume. It was drawing nearer. The steel doors were being thrown open. In compliance with rule 9 I took my stand in readiness "on the mark on the floor," till, with a fierce, nerve-tearing rattle, the metal sheet before me swung upon its creaking hinges and a blaze of glorious sunlight poured unrestrictedly in and dazzled my unaccustomed eyes.

The exultations of my heart were shortlived.

A lusty command rumbled from wall to wall.

"Put out yer bed an' tub. Look alive!"

Hastily I placed the sleeping equipment and battered sanitary convenience where directed, and a sharp, short kick on the part of the warder sent a waiting receptacle containing hominy and the day's allowance of bread spinning in towards me,

Surrounded by a now accentuated gloom I toyed with the coarse, tasteless meal, suggestive of half-boiled sawdust, and appeased my appetite with broken pieces from the regulation chunk of dry bread.

An hour or so later, when had died away the steady tramp of marching feet and medley of vociferous orders which told that the human cattle had been herded from their stalls and driven to their daily tasks, the door of the apartment I occupied again clattered open.

Outside I found my companions of the day before, the contingent of newcomers, standing stiffly in line with their faces to the wall in customary fashion. I silently took my place in the ranks. It was then still early in the morning, but till close on noon we stood there unsheltered from the merciless glare of a scorching December sun, while behind us a warder lounged lazily in the cool shade of a nearby porch. Suddenly he became obsequiously alert and attentive. From beyond the iron pickets of the yard an individual in gold braided authority was angrily roaring instructions.

"Sort that lot out and get them numbered up and put away," he was saying.

With brand new numbers staring from my drab clad breast and back, I was hustled to the particular hall which included, amongst its occupants, criminals of my peculiar type.

The officer in charge was loquacious. He knew me of old.

"So they got yer on a charge o' disaffection ter the King, did they? I'm a good Labor man, I am. But I don't believe in a workin' man 'avin' no respec' fer a King. After orl 'e's the King, ain't 'e?"

I murmured assent to his query, and he rambled on.

"I've 'eard yer speak many a time. Yer orl right with me. I'm a good Labor man, I am. All the same I don't agree with you altogether. I believe in conscription, an' I think that strikers ought ter be shot."

Again he assured me volubly that I was alright with him, but, as an afterthought, as though such assurance might have detracted from the dignity of his position, cautioned me with great emphasis to always salute and say "Sir" when he addressed me.

Leaving me to stand patiently upon the mat he hustled off to attend to other matters. Suddenly his voice came peremptorily from the far end of the hall.

"You, two-thirty-nine," he shouted, with no further token of friendliness. I went briskly forward to where he stood at the entrance of an open cell.

It was the show apartment. He pointed to the polished floor, the shining tinware, and the white scrubbed woodwork with evident pride.

"This is 'B' Hall, the cleanest hall in Long Bay Jail," he said. "If yer don't keep the peter I give yer up to dick like this I'll break yer damn neck."

He turned round and spoke to a waiting prisoner.

"Here y're. Fix 'im up, barber."

The barber swung forward a stool and within the space of twenty seconds a luxuriant crop of hair had tumbled about my feet.

As I arose a Bible was thrust into my hand, and so armed I passed into the shadowy mirk of the cell allotted me, and then, with the clash of steel ringing mockingly in my ears, crouched down on to the chained stool, nameless, numbered, shaven-headed, degraded, and miserable.

The Breaking In.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

To me jail was ever a terrible place, but the first days of my incarceration were a veritable hell. It is not good to recall those cruel, year-like hours of tribulation. I try to forget them. Time and again I close, as I think, forever those saddened pages of memory. But, maybe with the harsh call of angry authority in the factory above my office, maybe with the sudden clatter of a falling implement in the workshop below, maybe with the dirge-like tread of passing soldiery, the flood gates are re-opened and the recollection of that wretched term of "separate" comes back with horrible and overwhelming intensity.

At times I sat for hour after hour in the shadowy gloom of the narrow cell; at times I paced its limits, not wearily and brokenly, but with a fierce, surging vigor born of sheer desperation.

As yet my mind had not become reconciled to a living tomb, with walls of stone and door of sheeted steel, nor my eyes accustomed to the dim haze of the

ill-lighted place, and so Bible and Regulation Book remained in their places untouched.

At daybreak, when had ceased the clamor of the call-bell, I would hear the jarring bolts shooting and re-shooting, the coarse streams of command and abuse drawing nearer and nearer, till at length, with a rattle of keys which seemed to grate into my very soul, the door of my own cell would jerk open. Blinded by the sudden access of light I would push out my folded hammock and sanitary tub with groping haste. The door would then re-shut upon me and a tin of tasteless hominy which, as yet, I could not touch.

Later on the silence would be broken by the marching tramp of hundreds and hundreds of pairs of feet as the prisoners passed out to their daily tasks.

At ten o'clock, in company with fourteen or fifteen other prisoners also doing "separate," I, putting aside my interminable task of polishing tinware, was led out to a towering wall-girt yard for exercise. Arranged at intervals of six paces apart the order to march was given, and we set off at a quick step. A huge iron-barred gate was locked upon us, and from the outside a burly young giant stood jangling his keys, watching us with an eagle eye, and cursing volubly the one who dared to vary in the slightest degree the allotted space between us.

There was no leader to this weird procession. We formed an ever-moving circle, ghastly, tragic, and pathetic.

Because of an incident connected therewith I remember best of all my first morning of Long Bay exercise. Overhead the sun shone fiercely. Perspiration streamed down our faces, but still we seemed to go faster and faster. In me the insults and gibes of the warder ceased to awaken resentment. At first, as our pace, instead of relaxing, grew faster and faster, I could not understand the reason of the quickened stride of myself and comrades. Then it dawned upon me. We were almost happy. After the nauseating terror

of those hideous cells it was joy to feel the fierce, searching sunshine, and see the faces of men. We lived to life's full each minute as it came and then slipped away to leave us closer to another period of darksome solitude.

Between the layers of felt in one of my cell slippers I had found secreted a few flakes of tobacco. I had them tucked in the palm of my hand, and, glancing round, made a sign to the prisoner behind me. He was a slight, pleasant-faced young fellow, whom I had seen emerge from the cell next to mine. He understood my gesture, and as I dropped the tiny ball of tobacco on to the asphalt he quickly snatched it up. A minute or so later he fell out of the ranks and crossed over to the row of open closets against the wall. I was watching him in passing, and saw a tell-tale wisp of blue smoke creep up from where he was. He, too, saw it, and made a violent effort to smother it with his coarse straw hat—but was too late. With a howl of rage the warder unlocked the gate and hesitated. He did not enter, but shouted a command.

"Come here, you in the closet. You, Number One Forty-three," he said.

Our step had lost its ringing rhythm, but we marched on as Number One Forty-three obediently passed out the iron portal. There came a quick, sharp, heavy thud, and the lad went sprawling across the outer court. He rose unsteadily to his feet and pressed his hands in a vague sort of way against his shaven head.

From various points a host of jail officials were glancing disinterestedly across, and, as though by way of explanation to them, the fiend in human shape yelled out with lying malignancy to his wretched victim: "I'll learn yer to call me a bloody cow."

A low, rumbling murmur of impotent rage burst from our lips as we saw Number One Forty-three hustled unresistingly away towards the cells.

I completed that first sixty minutes of jail exercise filled with an oppressiveness that even the glare of cherished sunlight could not dispel. We filed back to "B Hall" and passed One Forty-three standing with his face to a wall and a trembling hand still pressed against his temple. That was the last I ever saw of him. In the afternoon he was not led forth with us to drill. At a quarter-past four a warder entered, ransacked my cell and person, slammed and bolted the steel door for the night, and then passed on to the cell next mine—the cell of Number One Forty-three.

I heard the key turn in the padlock, and a voice call: "Why the Hell ain't yer standin' on the mark at attention?"

There was a moment's pause, then the bullying shout continued:

"By Gawd, I'll break yer in once and fer all. I'll teach yer ter sulk round 'ere."

He called along the outer hallway in still louder tones:

"I say, George, give me a 'and fer a minute."

There came the sound of a violent scuffle, then a muffled cry of pain, mingled with the dull, sickening thud of heavy blows.

As the steel bolts grated back into place the coarse voice sounded cheerily.

"Thanks, George, ole chap," it said.

I placed my ear against the stone dividing wall and listened intently, but could hear no sound.

That night I slept but little. As at midnight I lay upon my hammock watching the moonbeams stealing through the narrow bars above, I heard, in the death-like silence, the low whine of a poor, tortured animal—a boy animal numbered One Forty-three.

The Door to Eternity.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies;
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes;
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The first task allotted me to perform outside my cell was as eerie as mortal mind could imagine. It was on the afternoon of my third day in jail that I was led out and told off to scrub the most dismal of all the myriad enclosures which go to make up a first-class prison—the condemned cells.

In the outside world there exists many weird misunderstandings as to the details of an orthodox jail hanging. From childhood I have heard tales of long, solemn processions, headed by a white-robed chaplain, followed by the black-clad governor, the trembling prisoner, and a retinue of braided officials, winding slowly along towards the gallows. Such does not apply to Long Bay Penitentiary, where most of the New South Wales hangings of to-day transpire.

At Long Bay the condemned cells, two in number, are located at the extreme end of the second tier of

cells which adorn either side of "B" Hall. They are built to face each other across the hallway, and the only difference which exists between them and their fellows lies in the fact that within their walls, at a distance of three feet from and at right angles to the doorway, each contains a fence of iron bars. It is in the passage-way so formed that the guard sits day and night to keep his watch over the prisoner, sleeping or waking, lest the doomed being should himself attempt to rob the gallows of its prey.

Midway between the facing doorways and at a distance of about four feet from each the expanse of iron floorway is broken by a neat boarded square, above which looms ominously a huge black beam extending from wall to wall. The boarded square is the gallows trapdoor, and the hideous object overhead is the gibbet itself.

Upon the day of the hanging a couple of trembling steps forward from the cell door bring the prisoner to that terrible platform of death, and a slight shuffle arranges him in position, with a hobnailed-booted foot on either side of the division slit. The noose is slipped over his neck, a lever jerked aside, the double trapdoor flies apart, and the business of the morning is completed.

The furniture of the condemned cells is similar to that of others—the shelf-table, tin dish, floor-worn felt slippers, quart pot, even to the wooden stool chained to the wall upon which the unhappy man may rest his nerve-racked person and gaze out upon the hideous beam and platform awaiting without.

I will never forget the feeling of revulsion and indescribable horror that crept over me as I scrubbed the corners of those gruesome places, and arranged the slippers in readiness for a future wearer. Something even impelled me to draw out the stool to the full length of its clanking chain and, seating myself upon it, count the minutes as they sped relentlessly by. I remembered the cases of two men, Wilson and Benzing,

who had just previously been hanged, and, allowing my high-strung powers of visualisation to exert themselves to their fullest, I lived again the last tragic moments of their lives.

The approaching steps of a warder re-started me upon my task, and, gathering up my gear, I went out to clean the boarded square.

Despite all that is said by way of justification, a jail hanging is one thing and one thing only. It is simply a cool, callous, cruel, brutal undertaking performed by cool, callous, brutal men in a cool, callous, brutal, business-like manner for payment received.

Tales are told of prisoners awaiting the fulfilment of the death penalty being allowed whatever they may desire in the way of food. This is an absolute fabrication. While in jail I conversed with many who at the last moment have had a death sentence commuted to imprisonment for life, and from them I learned the truth. A condemned man is not engaged upon productive labor, and so, in accordance with the prison regulations, is supplied with Number One ration. Except for Number Five, dry bread and water, this is the very lowest class of ration. If a man awaiting execution becomes greatly perturbed in mind he may make application to the doctor, who has power to grant him a tiny allowance of coarse fig tobacco and an ounce of tasteless brown sugar.

And so I completed the hateful work and turned my back upon those living tombs, but that night in the darkness I sat grappling with a mighty problem. This was the problem: Which was the greater crime—for a man to rise up in the heat of an overwhelming passion and perform some terrible act, or for several paid officials to combine together to place a human being in a barred cage, to callously gloat over his anguish day after day, and then on the fatal morning lead him forth, bind his knees, his ankles, his wrists before him, his elbows behind him, and shatter his backbone with a jerk which lands him into eternity?

Ships That Pass.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

"B" Hall, of the Long Bay Penitentiary, is a gruesome place. Not that, as seen from the centre court, it differs in outer appearance from the grim fac-similes arranged with mathematical precision on its either side; not that its cell-lined interior, deep, dark, and narrow, differs one whit in design from that of its surrounding fellows. "B" Hall is a gruesome place—gruesome because of a shadowy something ever lurking away down at its further end—a something which greets the eye of the strangely-garbed beings as they enter the iron-grated portals; a shadowy something which dances before them long after the heavy cell door clashes to at their number-branded backs; an ever-present something which cannot be forgotten—the Gallows.

I wish to deal no further with this horror. I simply mention its existence because, to my mind, the accentuated oppressiveness of "B" Hall, occasioned by

this ghastly presence, lends a greater pathos to the incident I am about to relate.

The cell occupied by me was directly opposite the head of the stairway of "B" Hall.

To the uninformed I must mention that each and every orthodox prison cell is perforated at a height of about five feet from the floor, with a peephole for the occasional convenience of the guard. This is covered on the outside by a sliding flap fastened by a clip.

It is a common practice of prisoners to release this fastening, and so render the flap movable from the inner side. Stolen waters are indeed sweet. The untold delight of gazing through this tiny aperture into prohibited space till darkness creeps up and obliterates the monotonous array of bolts and padlocks opposite must needs be experienced to be understood. The possibility of detection is great, but the inexplicable pleasure afforded is considered to be well worth the risk of dire consequence.

The evening upon which I first ventured to regale myself in this manner will ever remain with me—the long, dismal line of brown-painted doors, behind each of which a fellow-being grappled with vain regrets, the eerie silence, the gleam of polished steel, the deserted passage which stretched to that far end where the thing of death cast its awful shadow. And then it was that, as my vision travelled from object to object, I became aware that I was not the only one who found attraction in a morbid survey of the surroundings.

Directly opposite me, but on the floor below, was an open cell with the barred grating in place of the solid iron door conceded upon occasions to long sentence prisoners in the incipient stages of the term of punishment meted to them. To my gaze the head and upper part of the body of the occupant of this apartment alone were visible.

It was a fair head, almost inclined to auburn. Its owner stood motionless in front of the opening, and both his hands rested on the bars before him.

The Sphinx-like attitude of the man attracted and held my gaze. And so we kept our vigil—he staring steadily before him and I peering unseen from my point of vantage.

I do not know how long we continued thus, but suddenly the man below raised his head and glanced at the fanlight through which the last feeble rays of the late afternoon were struggling.

It was only a passing glance, but was sufficient to show me a face I knew—a face I had seen in happier days, illumined by the pent-up emotions of a heart that yearned only for the dawning of a better and brighter phase of existence for the class from which he sprung—the face of Donald Grant.

I wearied of watching, but long after night had enshrouded all I returned to the peep-hole, and down below in the streaky moonlight the outline of a motionless figure was still vaguely visible.

At daybreak I donned by hideous garb in response to the clangor signal, and as I did so resolved, by fair means or foul, to speak with Donald Grant.

The opportunity came sooner than I expected.

The door of my cell grated ominously, and the face of a burly warder appeared. "Here, sweeper," he bawled, "start No. 239 on the locks with emery." No. 239 was I.

It was a coincidence that the lock upon which I commenced operations was the lock of the cell with the grated door—a coincidence speedily arranged by a few muttered words with the understanding sweeper.

I glanced at the cell information card, fitted in its docket on the wall. It read as follows:—

Division, B.

No. of prisoner, 59.

Date of conviction, 1916.

Length of sentence, 15 years' penal servitude.

Grant had drawn the wooden stool to the full extent of the chain which fastened it to the wall, and was sitting slightly back from the barred door.

"Hallo!" I said. And as I looked across I realised the terrible tragedy of it all.

There was Donald Grant, whose wondrous eloquence and passionate sincerity had stirred the very souls of tens of thousands—Donald Grant, a helpless, listless prisoner.

He greeted me with a query, "What are you doing here?"

"War Precaution—Billy Hughes," was my laconic reply.

His face lighted up with the old fire, and, for a moment, he was the Donald Grant I used to know. But it faded away and left him what he was—Convict B59, of Long Bay Penitentiary.

I busied myself with the emery, and he made a few of the stereotyped remarks which ever pass between prisoners—remarks touching upon food, blankets, and warders.

To encourage reference to his own sad lot, I suggested the possibility of an early freedom. He only smiled in a weary sort of way.

"Yes; in 1931," he said.

I told him about outside determination, about pamphlets, speeches, and agitation. He seemed to think that I wished to please him, and showed no sign of belief.

There was a sudden bustle at the entrance of "B" Hall as the ration-bearers entered. It was 7 a.m.

A loaded sweeper rushed past rattling a tin of hominy and a block of bread on to the cemented floor before each doorway. A warder followed in his wake, and clutched the lock which glittered with the effect of my concentrated effort.

"Get back to your cell," he shouted at me, swinging open the grated door. As I turned to go a heavy boot pushed forward the unappetising meal towards Donald Grant, and once more the bolts were clashed into place.

Hard Labor.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill,
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill;
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

It was a joy to escape from the eternal mirk of the sunless cell and the incessant tinware polishing of "separate," and so, with a heart almost glad, I one morning found myself lined up for labor out on the prison farm.

Across the courtyards the squad of which I was a unit swung in single file, halting by the huge entrance gates of the prison proper, outside of which the wall-bound cultivation fields lay. Here we were taken charge of by a guard, armed to the teeth with rifle, revolver, and bandolier laden with murderous, lead-capped cartridges.

He gave the order, "New men, one step forward." I and two others responded, and were marched across to the Governor's office to hear read what is facetiously styled the "Riot Act."

A senior warder stepped out, and, staring at us savagely over the top of an unwieldy document, rattled off an unintelligible jargon with parrot-like monotony.

"Yer understand now," he said threateningly.

I dared to make known the fact that I had not quite caught the full context of the oration and he turned livid with rage.

"By God, I'd explain it ter yer if I had my way," he spluttered. "I'd boot a bit o' understandin' inter yer. It's this. If yer leave yer job or act suspicious yer'll get a lump o' lead tangled up in yer guts."

Without further parley we paraded back to the squad, replied to the call of our numbers, and moved out under the iron portal on to the arid waste known at Long Bay by the courtesy title of "farm."

Armed with an iron fork I started in to work. My task consisted of turning up and weeding a huge patch upon which were to be planted tomatoes—not for the prisoners, by the way.

At the end of half an hour I paused to straighten my back. An angry shout from the warder leaning languidly upon his rifle in the shadow of the wall greeted my action.

"Bog in there, you damn loafer."

I obediently "bogged" back in.

The sun crept higher and higher, and, after the days of close confinement, the glare of midsummer became unbearable. Occasionally a hot, dry gust of wind would sweep across, laden with choking, blinding dust. The unaccustomed stooping brought agonising pains into my shoulders and thighs, and a feeling of nausea welled into my parched throat. Around me a hundred other unfortunates bent silently to their tasks, and I, too, plodded on. For days I had turned aside from the repulsive food of the jail, and now a starved weakness took possession of me. I began to grow giddy and ill.

At last, in sheer desperation, I let the digging fork slip to the ground, and pressing one hand to the small

of my tortured back and the other to my sweat-soaked brow, I stood oblivious to all.

It was a brutal oath and a sharp jab in the side—the jab of a steel-shod rifle butt—that brought me back to earth.

The guard broke off in his tirade of abuse. He saw that I was ill. He lessened his voice a trifle and explained.

"You cows forget that you ain't at a Sunday School picnic. Don't yer know that's the Guvner's 'ouse on the 'ill? I'm a Labor man, but, by Christ, I can't afford ter lose me job no more than anybody else can."

When twelve o'clock came I could hardly stagger into line.

A husky young fellow, with a freckled face and tokens of hair that may have been red ere it was shaven off, brought me a tin of water. As he proceeded to don his numbered jacket I noticed that his arms were tattooed with designs which smacked of the sea.

"You'll be orright by an' by," he said under his breath. "Yer a bit soft yet, that's wot's the matter. Yer got over yer first four hours, anyway."

I envied him his smart step and the unwearied swing of sturdy body as his branded back danced on before me.

Without warning he stepped suddenly out of the ranks and dived at the lace of one of his ill-shaped prison boots.

A raucous halt was called. With painful deliberation he knotted and double-knotted the apparently offending string. I watched in dull amazement, and marvelled at his temerity. The warder toyed carelessly with his rifle and hummed the lines of a hymn. His affability was ominous.

The sailor lad stepped towards the place in the rank he had vacated, but the voice of the warder intercepted him.

"Please step this way, if you really don't mind," he said with a sarcastic sweetness. With a frightened look in his eyes the young fellow obeyed.

"Open your hands!" The command came sharp and terse.

The grimy, toil-hardened hands were opened and a crumpled piece of frayed cigarette fell to the ground.

The guard picked it up in triumph.

"You an' yer bootlace tricks," he said, shaking his rifle butt threateningly. "I'll fix yer. I've been waitin' fer a chance ter trim your wings, me 'earty."

We continued our march, but I noticed that the spring had gone from the step in front of me, and the freckled hands clenched till the finger nails seemed to bite into their very palms.

Beside the door of my cell the regulation midday meal stood waiting. I picked it up, and, placing it in a corner untouched, waited till the door clashed to and then lay down upon the cement floor.

warder had passed on. My door had been left unopened.

I caught the low mutter of comrade convicts as each stepped forth from his dismal den and dressed off from the right in the cocoanut-matted hallway. Two minutes later their cumbersome jail boots were striking the outer flags as they trudged back to their toil on the farm.

I stood helplessly awaiting events. I had not the slightest idea as to why I had been left behind. A hundred and one mysterious possibilities presented themselves, and so I waited on in a state of vague trepidation.

At about half-past one the steel door swung to on its creaking hinges.

"Grab hold of yer Bible an' hair brush," said a voice filled with the customary viciousness of the jail warder. I seized the red-backed testament and drop-sisal hair brush. The reason why this latter article had been supplied me was beyond comprehension. There was a deep irony in the fact that it was placed in my possession immediately after the shaving off of my hair. On the other hand, my respectful request for a tooth brush had been met with a howl of derision.

"By Gawd," I had been told, "yer'll be wantin' a clothes brush soon ter keep the dust orf yer numbers. Christ Arlmighty, some o' you toeraggers (short-timers) take the cake."

And so I had, perforce, to content myself with an unwanted hair brush, which often in the twilight of my cell I would for want of better to do wear down still further by scrubbing it against the shooting bristles of my jail-cropped head.

Passing both Bible and brush across to the prisoner employed as hall sweeper, I strode in solitary state out to the centre court, where I remained standing with my face some few inches away from a high brick wall.

To Pastures New.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

I cannot recall to the day the actual length of my sojourn at Long Bay Penitentiary. There was such a gruelling sameness about those monotonous rounds of daylight that now in memory their number defies calculation.

As it was they terminated abruptly. The heat of the morning had been more than excessive, the labor of the farm seemed to have sapped my last atom of strength, and I lay stretched upon the cemented cell floor. The one o'clock afternoon "turn to" bell clamored noisily along the passage ways, and I obediently arose in readiness for the door to open.

The harsh rattle of the shooting bolts drew nearer. A heavy footstep paused for a moment outside, and then the fainter growing lock rattle betokened that the

Behind me a man was sweeping. I stole a glance in his direction, and saw that he was old and tottering—evidently well beyond seventy years of age. As he passed a rattling signal sounded in his throat, and a little piece of tobacco fell at my feet.

"Hide it in yer sock, me porr boy," he jerked.

At the end of a full hour I was joined by a squad of eight other prisoners. Shortly afterwards we faced about from the wall to hearken to the utterances of the most autocratic person that it has been my misfortune to come in contact with—the then Governor of Long Bay Penitentiary. He eyed us in his usual scornful fashion, and spoke briefly and to the point.

"Thank God, we're going to get rid of you lot. You're going to get a taste of what real jail is—get the fear of Christ put into you. The whole lot of you will be shipped off to Goulburn in the morning, and this place won't be any the worse off for your loss."

His raucous tones had become like music to my ears. Never before had I felt such a surge of exultation. From the faces of my companions also the look of dull, helpless unhappiness had faded away like the mists of morning. They, too, were glad. We did not know what lay before us. We had no idea as to what species of hell Goulburn Jail might be. We did not know, and we did not care. All we knew was that we were to be taken from Long Bay. Long Bay, with its ever-ready curses and ever-ready cuffs! Long Bay, with its blasphemy and brutality! Long Bay, with its toil and turmoil! Long Bay, with its swarm of officials in whom atavistic barbarity is reflected from highest to lowest! Long Bay, that abyss of sin; that gruesome laboratory in which criminals are manufactured! Long Bay, that most terrible and inhumane of all the hell-holes of the putrid jail system of Australia! We were to leave Long Bay behind, and we were glad.

As we filed off towards the storeroom, where we were to be outfitted with brand new uniforms for the

journey, we found the gateway blocked by the old sweeper. He was feebly struggling to free his yard broom from the fence pickets between which it was inextricably jammed. With a vicious oath the warden seized him by the stooping shoulders and pitched him to one side, and we left him groping unseeingly around, with the tears welling from his old, unseeing eyes.

Some hours after, when the lonely cell had again claimed me as its own, with shapeless, new smelling jacket, trousers, bodice-vest, and shirt folded beneath my head, I lay tossing through the watches of the night.

The Escort.

And thus we rust life's iron chain,
 Degraded and alone,
And some men curse, and some men weep,
 And some men make no moan;
But God's eternal laws are kind,
 And break the heart of stone.
—Ballad of Reading Jail.

Although upon the morning of the day of the "escort" I received my ration of dry bread and hominy at an earlier hour than usual, I was fated to go breakfastless. Barely had I taken up the ancient spoon wherewith to begin operations when the iron door was clanked open and I was ordered to leave the cell. Down the iron stairway I tramped to find my eight companions of the previous day already standing in line.

The echo of our stride, ringing back from the labyrinth of courtyards still wrapt in early morning silence, reminded me vividly of my first evening of entry into those grim precincts of Long Bay prison.

By the towering gateway, which marked the main entrance, we paused to allow the unlocking of an enclosure, styled in prison parlance a "grill," and into this we stepped one by one. A "grill" resembles in size and construction the cages in which are placed the

untamable animals of a Zoo. On three sides it is walled in with heavy brick, while the entire face and top are barred with great closely-set rods of iron.

Three uniformed officials followed us into the "grill" and double-locked the narrow gate behind them, while upon the outer wall a being with rifle on shoulder and revolver at side stood in readiness for some impossible emergency.

On the ground before us lay a pile of heavy rusty-looking iron chain.

At first I did not awaken to the full import of its presence. Then the truth dawned upon me. We were to be chained together, the victims of a sordid display of the atavistic barbarity which characterises the jail system of to-day.

Standing meekly in line the heavy chain was dragged out beside us. Beginning with the leader the warders laboriously screw-locked the rust-tarnished manacles upon our unresisting wrists. The officer who seized upon me naturally attracted my especial attention. He was very young-looking, evidently a new recruit, and I noticed that, as he fumbled clumsily with the shackle lock, a deep flush of burning red crept into his half-averted face.

At length their work completed the officials drew back to talk in undertones amongst themselves, whilst we, the drab-clad convicts, manacled together in barbarous fashion, at a distance of about eighteen inches between each man, stood listening to the clank of the swinging chain, mortified, humiliated, and degraded.

It was then about half-past six in the morning, and it was not till half-past four in the afternoon, after ten hateful hours of veritable purgatory, that the shackles were unscrewed and the bonds fell noisily away.

At seven o'clock the outer gates were thrown open and a tramcar rattled in across the jail threshold. With eyes enclosed by large, dark gauze-bordered goggles, in order to conceal our identity from possible

acquaintances who might catch a glimpse of us while disembarking, we struggled awkwardly with our unaccustomed bonds and crawled into the waiting carriage.

Our destination was Darlinghurst Jail, and, as we journeyed on, the noise of awakening bustle in the unseen city without stirred to a pitch of terrible intensity the craving for freedom.

At Darlinghurst we were placed in a double-locked cell, but our bonds were not removed, and so we lolled against the wall in miserable silence. Already the iron was cutting into our wrists, and, although we had soon learned to grasp hold of the heavy chain and thus lessen the chafing drag, each man displayed an ever-increasing wrist sore.

At length one of the number requested our permission to rest upon the concrete floor, the place being otherwise seatless, and in order to grant him this mighty favor we were one and all compelled to do likewise. The brevity of distance which separates man from man would allow no other course.

Even to the warders, who from time to time stared in upon us, we must indeed have been a sorry spectacle—a huddled, goggled cluster of motionless humanity.

At last we were led forth and wedged into a prison motor van, to pour forth from its dark interior at the Central Railway Station. The grotesqueness of our prison garb, shaven heads, and disfiguring goggles attracted the passers-by, and through the colored glass we bravely met the curious stare.

The prison car was standing ready, and towards it we turned. Our iron fetters had awakened looks of sympathy in some of the watchers, and in others ejaculations of horror and awe. In the forefront of the crowd a tiny girl began to weep bitterly.

"Oh, Mummy, Mummy," she wailed, and I can yet hear the tragic ring of pity in her childish voice. "Oh, Mummy, somebody has gone and chained them all up together."

There was a world of pathos in the little incident, and it cut me to the quick. As I marched from view I inwardly blessed the glasses which hid the moisture which dimmed my eyes.

The car we occupied was divided into two sections, one of which was for the accommodation of the guard and the other for the prisoners, the latter being walled in by iron pickets. There was not the slightest possibility of our being able to effect an escape, and yet our chains were allowed to remain upon us. Not only was the metal-girt apartment windowless, but we were well guarded by relays of revolved officials, who smoked endless supplies of cigarettes and languidly perused the papers of the day, while we snuffed up the unaccustomed aroma and eyed the printed columns with hungry yearning. The request of one of our number for a "look at what was doing on the outside," met with an emphatic refusal on the grounds that it was "against the regulations." However, with a grandiose air of benevolence, we were told that we could have a chat together if we didn't "talk too loud."

And so we talked in subdued tones, each man at first to his neighbor on the chain, but gradually the conversation drifted along the line and developed into a medley of cross-firing. Some were discussing the horrors of the hell we were leaving behind—Long Bay. Some were conjecturing as to what would be the extent of tyranny we would meet at Goulburn. Some whined complainingly about dish-water soup and rat-defiled hominy, and others whispered confidingly the details of the court trial that had been theirs.

We were a well-assorted herd of felons. In appearance we were tall and short, rotund and spare, burly and delicate, while our alleged crimes were as equally varied.

The train journeyed on, and swaying to its motion we leaned forward our cropped heads and told to each other the thoughts that were uppermost, and then, when

we had naught else to say, we sank back into a dismal silence, broken only by the clink, clink, clink of the swinging chain.

The coming of meal-time broke in upon the gloomy monotony of the day—a “meal” of six ounces of dry bread per man. Like myself, the others in the hurry of the morning had also been deprived of their breakfast, and we gnawed hungrily at the chunks of bread till every crumb had disappeared. We watched the guard eating his lunch from a white serviette, and in guilty haste he passed us in his two remaining sandwiches, and each man eagerly swallowed his carefully allotted portion.

The afternoon dragged slowly by. Occasionally one of the gang would start up with a look of ashamed apology, and we, understanding, would rise and follow where he went, the while grasping hold of our bonds to lessen their grinding weight. Yes, in this twentieth century, while under a sky glowing with the sunshine of a December day, the outside world moved on its careless way, we unhappy beings, short-chained together, crouched down into a closely wedged human mass in order that a tugging companion might enter the closet retreat of that iron cage in response to the call of Nature. There were men in that chain gang delicate and refined, and there were men coarsened and roughened by close contact with the seamy side of existence, but there was not one who did not feel to the fullest the vileness and the soul-destroying mortification of those minutes of waiting.

* * * *

At North Goulburn we disembarked. On a neighboring hilltop, gaunt and hideous, we saw the jail walls that were to hide us. The sudden cessation of jolting rumble told us that the police van had passed from the roadway on to the asphalt drive, and that we had arrived at our new abode. A moment later we had alighted and from wrist after wrist the bonds were unloosed and the shackles fell away.

As they did so each man mechanically took hold of his aching arm and gazed stupidly at the livid, encircling welt left by the inhuman and unnecessary bond. Unnecessary, I say, because, excepting the space of about ten minutes occupied in transfer from iron-bound vehicles to iron-bound train cage, and vice versa, we had been securely closed in behind impregnable iron bars, our every action zealously watched by armed guards, and yet the clanking, galling, goading chains had been left upon us.

It was half-past four in the afternoon and late in the prison day. The sun of midsummer was still high in the heavens, but the quiet of night already hovered over all. The senior warder in charge gave the command, and through the jail garden, whose pathways wound in and out amidst a wealth of blossom, we marched away to join the silent throng of those who pass through tribulation.

Goulburn Jail.

We were as men who through a fen
Of filthy darkness grope;
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
Or to give our anguish scope.
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was hope.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

In the dim light of early morning I surveyed the cell allotted me in Goulburn Jail.

It differed in no way from its fellows at Long Bay.

My arm was aching excruciatingly, and around my wrist the gruesome memento of the day before showed more vividly than ever the gall of the heavy iron manacle that had bound it. Two months later I could still see the traces of that degrading bruise.

At 8 o'clock, together with my companions of the chain gang, I stood in the storeroom and was stripped of the outfit what had been supplied for the train of the outfit. New clothing was too good for hard-labor journey. New clothing was too good for hard-labor prisoners, and so we were re-dressed in garments old, frayed, and worn, against which the many staring and new-made canvas number brands showed up in hideous contrast.

One by one we were called away to stand meekly, with hat in hand, before the august person of the Governor.

The official in question proved to be the absolute antithesis of his Long Bay contemporary, both in appearance and manner. He was slight of stature, kind in speech, and a genuine compassion for the victims of

the system of which he was part and parcel was exhibited in his kindly eyes. He addressed us by name instead of number, and making allusion to each particular case, spoke as man to man. So it was that each one who entered the office of the Governor with either that air of half-angry defiance or fawning obsequiousness which prison air invariably breeds, returned with a countenance expressive of an inexplicable wistfulness.

But we were to learn that it is not the Governor of a Jail that truly governs, but the Book of Regulations. Under the Australian system, Red Tape is rampant, and everyone of those countless official orders must be carried out to the veriest detail. True, the temperamental peculiarities of a Jail Governor are superficially reflected in his inferiors; superficially—but that is all. If the Governor be a cursing, brow-beating bully, then his warders are openly cursing, brow-beating bullies. If he be humane in manner, then his warders do their cursing and brow-beating in secret.

It was on a Monday morning that I took up my new jail duties on the wood-heap at Goulburn, and it was on the afternoon of the following day that I sought permission to see the chief overseer, with hands bleeding and raw from the unaccustomed friction of the rusty gaspipe handles of the heavy mauls. I had worked on till all the nigger-driving tactics of the warders around me and all the jeering jibes and insults from the gunman on the wall above could make me go no further.

With hands treated and bandaged by a prison "lifer," I was told off to a so-called easier task, the disinfecting of night tubs.

However, I was not destined to go on with this disgusting occupation. On the morrow an instruction was issued from the Governor's office, and from then till the completion of my sentence I worked as assistant to a comrade who was "doing the whole lot," the head gardener of Goulburn Jail.

Routine.

Like ape or clown in monstrous garb,
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalt yard;
Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

This is the routine of an ordinary day of prison life.

At six o'clock the "get up" gong clangs throughout the jail, both in winter and summer. At half-past six the doors are noisily unpadlocked, blankets and hammocks neatly folded, placed without, and, seizing his "sanitary" night tub, each prisoner leaves his cell to fall silently in line upon the matting of the hall. At a given signal out file the grey, grotesquely armed companies across the courtyard to where awaits a huge iron offal cask.

As each man approaches this contraption in orderly array, he empties his respective tub into the noisome depths and hands it to a waiting prisoner, styled a tubman, who stacks it in place with the others.

The silent march is continued to a long washbench; jackets and bodices are doffed, shirts thrown open, and ablutions proceeded with till the last individual has re-dressed and joined his companions in their ceaseless parade around the yard to the call of a warder's ceaseless "Left, right, left, right." A bell sounds suddenly, the monotonous step cry dies away, and a peremptory halt is called. The armed guards on the wall above stand stiffly "at attention," rifle in hand. The silent deputy-governor appears upon the scene. The silent

squad dresses off from the right in military fashion, and in answer to the number call the reply of "Here, sir," accompanied by a salute, passes down the line.

In hearing me relate this incident of jail life, individuals who know not what jail is have told me that they would salute no man on earth. I have seen that type of person come into jail—good, strong, determined men. Defiantly they have refused to "sir" or salute. They have disappeared from the ranks, and days afterwards come back to our midst cringing and servile. Let a prisoner refuse to salute a jail governor, his deputy, or other official who demands such sign of submission, and a finger has simply to be raised in order to set in motion a machine which will crush the soul of any man. Give a man fourteen days, seven days, or even forty-eight hours of the eternal blackness of a punishment cell, with sixteen ounces of dry bread! Let him drag out the moments of unseeing anguish with nothing to do but to tear a button from his branded garb and toss it from him in order that he might searchingly grope to find it—do something to distract, something to occupy his mind, something to keep away the horrible fear of madness which such inhuman treatment must assuredly create! Take him and force—

But we must return to the waiting file of "felons."

The muster declared correct, the prisoners tramp back to the various treble-storied wings, at the entrance of which they pause to secure from a huge tray a tin containing hominy and a block of dry bread. Each enters his separate tomb, the doors clash to, and all is quiet.

At eight o'clock the call to work is sounded and all are led forth to their respective tasks. At twelve o'clock, after remustering for roll-call, the regulation ounces of food are issued and partaken in the solitude of the cell. From one o'clock the tasks continue, and at four sharp the prison working day ceases. Dry bread and hominy is again supplied and carried to the cells. Shortly after half-past four the doors are thrown

open and tins and spoons placed inside. It is "search time," and a warder enters to overhaul cell, furniture, and the prisoner himself. The latter, fully dressed, except for his boots and the fact that all buttons must be unfastened, steps forward and stands with his face to the wall. Behind him each nook and corner is ransacked in hopes of locating a sign of tobacco, sugar, lead pencil, books, or extra crusts of bread, and woe betide the poor creature who is detected in trying to secrete such prohibited article. A ladder is brought in to allow examination of the ventilator bars, and the walls are tapped with a long-handled hammer designed for the detection of excavation.

Eventually a gruff order is given and the prisoner faces right-about. Taking off the upper part of his clothing and throwing it, together with hat and boots, out into the passage, he stretches his arms out against the wall, while the warder seizes him, searches every inch of his body, and orders the removal of what more clothing he thinks necessary. Another command is then given, and the prisoner steps to the further end of the cell, where he stands with face again wallward till the searching of clothing and bedgear is completed, and the articles tossed in with the rattling sanitary tub. Then comes the heavy clang of the iron door and the grating of outside bolts to tell that, although still early in the afternoon, the seemingly endless night, with its ghostly call of watches, has begun.

I shudder to recall some of those nights in which, gripped by an overwhelming yearning for liberty, victim of a relentless insomnia, I frantically paced from wall to wall. Outside the guard crept past in slippers stealthiness; occasionally the click of the peep-hole flap would tell that an unseen eye was peering in upon me, and then, at the sound of a distant clock, the half-hour, long-drawn watch call would ring out from post to post: "Twelve o'clock; A-l-l's w-e-l-l"; "One o'clock; A-l-l's w-e-l-l," and so on till morning came to gild the unseen skies.

On Sundays and public holidays the ordinary workday routine is altered in such a way as to make life almost unendurable. Each Sabbath an hour of marching exercise is allowed in the morning, and an hour in the afternoon. Sometimes an extra hour for religious devotion is granted, but I found that church-time generally collided with one of the hours set apart for the "Fool's Parade," and so the only difference was that spiritual exercise was substituted for physical.

Each holiday, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Easter included, a prisoner is confined wholly to his cell except for the two hours of quick marching exercise, "four paces apart and no talking." On Saturday afternoons an hour of marching exercise is also given.

Of the one hundred and sixty-eight hours contained in one week a prisoner spends one hundred and twenty-six locked in his tiny, sunless cell. Should holidays occur his hours of incarceration will be even still greater. Out of each twenty-four hours seventeen hours of the ordinary week-day are spent in solitary, half-light confinement, nineteen hours of each Saturday, and twenty-two hours of each Sunday and public holiday.

Even though a person has been fortunate enough to secure a little readable literature, it barely happens that sufficient light can contrive to pierce the gloom in order that one may read without hurtful eyestrain.

But the greatest injustice of all lies in the fact that the misery occasioned by such unnecessary holiday and Sunday solitary confinement is accentuated by the fact that, as the prisoner is not engaged upon productive labor, his food ration is reduced by almost 25 per cent. and to veritable starvation level. This applies even to Christmas Day.

Time after time, in defiance of the watchful warders, I have deliberately hung back in the holiday march, knowing full well that an excess of exercise would only serve to increase the pangs of hunger already gnawing at my vitals.

Warders.

The warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw with eyes of awe
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

Maybe, friends and relations of jail warders will read these pages; maybe, even jail warders themselves will deign to honor them with their glance. I have no desire to go out of my way to hurt one's feelings, yet jail warders never lavished any mercy upon me, and therefore I feel under no obligation to be merciful in the relation of my dealings with them.

As an opponent of all that serves to bolster up the present-day social system, I have but scant respect for the man who follows the occupation of policeman, but yet the ordinary member of the police force is the personification of all that is noble in comparison to a jail warder. At times there lurks the element of danger in connection with the duties a policeman is called upon to perform, whereas a jail warder's duty is simply to use the awful power conferred upon him by walls of stone and bars of iron to terrorise, tyrannise, and oppress his crushed, spirit-broken, helpless fellow men.

Instance after instance I could relate and substantiate to justify my statements, but lack of space forbids, so a few must suffice.

Upon one occasion I was ill—extremely ill. For days and days I had gradually been growing worse, although I had continued to struggle out to the daily task. One morning I felt utterly unable to rise from my hammock, and lay tossing in the throes of a high fever born of colic and influenza.

At half-past six the warder jerked open the door of my cell.

"Get up!" he said.

I told him I was too ill to do so.

"Get up," he thundered, "or, by God, I'll boot you up."

I struggled into a standing position.

"Now, chuck out yer hammock and blankets!"

With a great effort I contrived to do his bidding, but, as he slammed and bolted the door, I collapsed into a heap on the floor.

As before said, it was half-past six in the morning, and although at intervals I arose from the floor, and, leaning weakly against the wall, knocked with the handle of my cell broom as long and as loudly as I dared, there was no response. It was not till twelve o'clock that the awful place was reopened and my ration tin tossed in. That afternoon, sick, weak, and racked with pain, I crept out to work rather than endure longer the tortured solitude of that dungeon.

* * *

The prison regulations say that every night the leaden spoon allowed each prisoner must be placed outside the cell door for fear of attempted suicide. When morning comes new arrivals often forget the spoon lying beside the door, and on innumerable occasions I have seen the warder follow them up as they bore their miserable ration cellward, kick the forgotten spoon to one side, slam the iron sheet, and leave the uninitiated

newcomer to scoop up the sticky, tasteless hominy with his bare hand or otherwise forego his scanty meal.

The vindictiveness exhibited by warders in their searching of a prisoner's cell and person passeth all understanding. One of the gravest offences that can be laid at the feet of a jail inmate is that of having tobacco in his possession. A flake of tobacco is sufficient to convict a man. Should a warder be so fortunate as to discover a piece of prohibited tobacco, he will invariably break off the minutest portion, pocket the remainder for his own use, and in childish glee rush off to lay a charge against his victim with the tiny wisp as evidence against.

The proudest moment of a warder's life appears to be when in searching a passing prisoner he finds a few dry crusts of contraband bread tucked away within the breast of his coarse shirt. It is all in the line of promotion, and he knows it. His superiors will note him to be a diligent fellow, and, incidentally, the wretched crust-hider will be sent without the slightest compunction along to the nerve-racking black cells.

For the most part they are an ignorant, uneducated type of man, and cannot understand a desire for literature. I well remember the howl of rage that went up when I was discovered with a copy of Scott's "Fair Maid of Perth" in my cell at a time when I was only entitled to the Bible. For two weeks the threat to expose my crime in all its heinousness and the contingent possibility of durance vile was hurled at me daily.

Man handling is rampant. Times out of number I have known men to be brutally struck down and kicked, and I myself have learned the weight of a warder's fist.

The galling nature of my surroundings at times inclined me to exhibit a defiance born of despair, and, maybe, from the standpoint of jail morality my conduct merited the blows. Still one instance rankles in my mind. A can containing warm water had been left standing at the door of my cell wing, and I had taken

some to drink. The warder who detected me, I suppose, felt quite justified in his mind for the blow that he dealt me, because the jail regulations did not say that I was entitled to the cheering effects of a drink of warm water.

One of the worst characteristics of the jail warder is his grovelling servility towards the Governor and higher officials generally. This exaggerated obsequiousness on the part of these uniformed flunkies is so pronouncedly prevalent as to awaken a feeling almost akin to disgust even in the hearts of their wretched victims.

As a matter of fact, looking at the matter broadly, the idea of the "humane" jail system of Australia being of a reformatory nature amounts to nothing but a cruel satire when one considers the type of individuals who are employed to do the reforming.

Literature.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word;
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard;
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

After he has completed his "separate" a prisoner is allowed during the first month of his incarceration a copy of the Bible or Prayer Book, together with a book of a strictly religious character.

Upon entering the second month he becomes entitled to a volume styled "educational," which may be still further supplemented from the beginning of the third month by carefully chosen and generally extremely ancient fiction. These books, both educational and otherwise, are allowed upon request to the extent of one each per week.

Generally speaking, the regulations governing the supply of reading matter appear to be passing fair as set forth in the Jail Regulation Book—as actually applied they are execrable.

In the first place, the lighting of a prison cell is extremely poor. Unless a prisoner be blessed with exceptionally good eyesight, save for a brief period of the seventeen hours of the ordinary day which he is

doomed to pass within the narrow precincts of his cell, he is unable to see sufficiently well to allow him to read. In Goulburn Jail I took particular notice and marked the exact period of time during which the sunlight directly penetrated my cell. It amounted to ten minutes per day.

The regulations say that in ordinary cases the night light—a low power electric globe, placed in such an absolutely high position as to render it almost useless as an aid to the perusal of reading matter—will be allowed to remain in the cells till eight o'clock in the evening. Unfortunately the regulations do not say at what hour the lights are to be turned on. This is left to the discretion of the warders in charge, and they are generally well content to see that lights are turned on in time to comply with the regulations regarding their turning off.

Always a passionate lover of literature and study, the inability to gratify such passion proved to be the greatest aggravation of my life in jail.

I well remember counting the weary bookless days of the first month as they dragged by until the time came when I was entitled to an "educational." With a feeling of elation I put in my request for the library catalogue and slate. The list contained the names of a few historical works well worth reading, and in joy I recorded them to be transferred by the warder to the card I was now entitled to.

That afternoon as I entered my cell after the task of the day had ended I found an old tattered volume cast in upon the floor. I picked it up and read the title. It was "The Apiarists' Guide, or Hints to Bee Farmers." I had dreamed of the treat in store for me all that day, and my disappointment knew no bounds. A desire to learn the mysteries of bee-farming had never been mine. In my early days the odious comparisons that had persistently been drawn betwixt my own shortcomings and the virtues of the "busy bee" had created within me an angry hatred of the insect. But

still I had to read, and by the time another week had trailed away and I was entitled to try my luck in the library tray once again, I had perused that book on bee-farming a score of times from cover to cover.

In the evening no book awaited me. My card lay upon the floor, and across it was scrawled, "Hints to Bee Farmers" not returned."

Next morning I protested to the officer in charge of the wing. His reply was logical from the standpoint of a warder.

"If the card says yer didn't return it, yer didn't, and that's all about it!"

The affair meant much to me, and I dared to protest against his judgment, whereupon he swung round menacingly and politely advised me to "Go to Hell!"

During the week, devoid of reading matter, which followed, I contrived to make surreptitious inquiry of the prisoner who assisted in the library, and he informed me that "The Apiarists' Guide, or Hints to Bee Farmers" was resting peacefully in its wonted corner of the bookshelf. "But, for God's sake, don't let on I told you," he said.

Another library day came round, but I received no book. In desperation I determined to take further action, and securing a piece of paper I pin-pricked a note to the warder in charge of the library, pleading with him to allow me a book to help break the grueling cell monotony. I signed the epistle with my number. The following morning the gentleman himself appeared at my cell door.

"Did you do this?" he inquired, holding up the paper containing the pierced wording.

I signified that I had done so.

"Where did you get the pin from?" he foamed. "Give it to me. By the living Jesus, I'll have you in the dark cells if I catch yer with a pin in yer possession again. And, further, yer can go to the devil before yer get another book from me."

The door clashed to and he was gone.

And so, deprived of my "educational," I pined for the end of the second month to come, and with it my right to a weekly copy of fiction.

In due course the longed-for day arrived, and a new card was filled in under my number. The first book of fiction I received did not tally with any mentioned in my request, nor did that of the second week. They were small books of the Garvician order, and my intention was to save them for perusal during moments of greatest depression, provided the light at such times allowed me to do so. But the book hunger was upon me, and upon each occasion I ultimately threw intention aside and devoured their contents, contenting myself during the balance of the time they were in my possession by reading them over and over again.

The third week brought me a copy of "Gulliver's Travels," but minus the biting satire which has rendered it famous. It was a child's edition. I did not read it, but walked the narrow limits in sorrowing disappointment.

There was an old man in the cell next to mine—a new arrival from Long Bay. On the Sunday morning he was marching in the exercise parade behind me, and I managed to maintain a few minutes' conversation.

I remarked that he must be wakeful, as I had heard his slippers feet padding up and down at two and three o'clock in the morning.

"Yes," he muttered; "I'm too old to hear the bell, and so I gets up an' folds me blankets fer fear they'll find me in bed."

My heart went out to him, and, knowing that he was yet without reading, on entering the wing I seized the large-typed "Gulliver's Travels" and thrust it in under his jacket. A smile of thanks shone from his rugged face.

The old man was new to jail and did not quite understand the position; thus he failed to pass me the book back at afternoon parade. In the evening search

it was found. The warden came to my cell and railed and cursed me for having dared to break the all-powerful regulations. I was fast becoming innured to such treatment, and so gave scant heed to his abusive tirade.

"Report it to the Governor," I said, "and let him do what he thinks fit."

But the matter was not reported. The warden seemed to fear that should the Governor happen to grant me permission to appeal to his better nature possibly my powers of persuasion might have resulted in his overlooking the heinous offence of having lent a poor, old battered fellow unfortunate a copy of "Gulliver's Travels." He contented himself by spitefully placing the volume in the drawer of his desk, and there, as far as I know, it remains to this day.

Having no book to return, I was unable to secure a further one, and so during the weary weeks that followed till the gates of Goulburn Jail opened to let me pass out from its grey walls, I had perforce to stifle all longing for literature to which I was justly entitled.

Time and again I determined in sheer desperation to lay my case before the Governor, but in mumbled re-converse with prison companions I was warned to refrain from such action.

Life in jail is bad at the best of times, but when a prisoner once assails the clannish instincts of his guardians by reporting an injustice meted to him at their hands, then 'twere better that he should die than live the tortured life that would be his.

Food.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime;
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

In Long Bay Jail, unless you happen to be sentenced to a very long term of imprisonment, you are not supplied with a knife and fork to assist in the partaking of food. Of a truth a leaden spoon is daily given the prisoner wherewith to transfer the questionable soup from battered dixie to mouth, but meat and vegetables must be rent asunder in primeval, bare-handed fashion.

At Goulburn and other outside prisons, though the knife is frequently devoid of blade and the fork minus its prongs, they are allowed the jail inmates. Nevertheless, upon the completion of his meal, the prisoner must hand them back to the wing sweeper to be carefully checked and placed under lock and key. Under our humane system there is not a prisoner who does not daily contemplate the advantages of suicide, and well the authorities know it.

In jail the morning ration and the night ration are identical—so many ounces of dry bread and so many ounces of hominy. There is a regulation allowing to certain prisoners an ounce of brown sugar per day and a half-pint of weak, lukewarm tea at night, but I did not receive such luxury, although I persistently made application.

The midday diet varies. As a matter of fact, such variation of food plays so great a part in the life of a prisoner that the names of the days of the week are substituted by an appellation significant of the piece de resistance of the noon-time meal. These substitutions, as I recall them, were as follows:—

Sunday—Corn Beef Day.	Thursday—Mutton Day.
Monday—Soup Day.	Friday—Boiled Beef Day.
Tuesday—Roast Beef Day.	Saturday—Roast Rabbit Day.
Wednesday—Rabbit Soup Day.	

In secret mention of an event that has transpired to break the grey monotony of life, a prisoner will refer to it as having occurred on last "corn beef day," the "soup day before last," and so on.

The bane of existence of every prisoner is rabbit. The longer he remains in jail the more he detests it, but still he continues to eat it, as food is supplied in sufficient quantity only to give him sufficient strength to carry out the daily task allotted him. Rabbit is not mentioned in the Jail Regulation Book, but yet it is supplied twice weekly on account of its cheapness. It arrives in the jail in a frozen state, enclosed in huge blocks of ice. On "rabbit soup day" these are tossed into huge steaming cauldrons, and not cooked but simply boiled down. But whether boiled down or allegedly roasted, it is invariably served out plus repulsive inward organs, privates, and very often excretion itself. Often on "rabbit days" I have known the whole jail to reek with a fearsome stench whilst cooking operations were in progress. On other days, meat, secured by tender—the worst possible at the lowest price—is given. In serving it up it is weighed out to the minutest fraction of an ounce, and bone and gristle are included in such weight. This is quite in accordance with the "Regulations." Oftentimes I have in the solitude of my cell, with hungry eagerness, removed the lid of my dixie to find the allotted measure

of "meat" made up wholly of bone and minus even a remnant of gristle.

Sundays and holidays, including Christmas, are the hungriest periods of all, as rations are reduced on account of a prisoner being confined to his cell without employment. On these days corn beef is always given—corn beef which I have known to be so absolutely rotten and offensive as to fill the cell with a noisome odor.

The vegetables vary in accord with the season, and range from chunks of unskinned pumpkin, seed carrots, stale potatoes boiled in their dirt, ancient unstringed beans, to cattle turnips and uncut cabbage leaves.

I once asked a prisoner who had been in jail for many years if the Labor Party during its administration had not secured prison reform in any direction whatsoever.

"Yes," he said in the vague, jerky manner of the "lifer." "They made 'em peel the punkin fer awhile, an' they made 'em wash the carrots clean, an'—an'—well, I don't know as they done anything else."

I have no hesitation in saying, and would gladly go before a commission to prove, that the food supplied prisoners in the jails of Australia is not only unappetising to a cruel degree, but insanitary and extremely deleterious to the poor wretches who must depend upon it for subsistence.

Every prisoner at the outset of his sentence, before his stomach becomes inured to such offal-like aliment, experiences illness after illness, attended with griping colic, violent diarrhoea, and, at times, even dysentery. In this connection alone there is room for sweeping reform in the prisons of Australia. It is indeed heart-rending in this land of plenty to think that food supplied to jail inmates, both as regards sufficiency and quality, is far below the standard set by other older and more poverty-stricken lands, yet such is undeniably a fact.

Each day a prisoner is chosen by the warders from among those not employed in the cook-house to act as delegate for his fellows. His duty is to stand by while cooking operations are in progress, and also to supervise the weighing out of rations. Regulations say that this delegate has power to condemn the food because of its quality, should he think necessary. In reality he has no such power, and even if he had he would never dare to apply it. Grim tales are told amongst the prisoners regarding the treatment meted out to the delegates who attempted to exercise a right that the Regulations told them they possessed—tales of brutality and black cells.

Regulations say that a prisoner may lodge an individual complaint with regard to his food, should he desire to do so. During my sojourn in jail I knew of only one man who moved in this direction. He occupied a cell directly opposite to mine. We others considered him to be slightly deranged, and he surely must have been or he would never have taken the step that he did. It was concerning the weight of food in his tin that he lodged his half-frightened complaint, and the meal was taken back to the cook-house.

A few minutes later I heard the warder's stentorian voice: "It was two ounces over-weight, so it's been taken out. Yer'll be locked up now till Monday, and then we'll see what the magistrate's got to say."

And so day after day the man who occupied a cell opposite mine, and I have taken care to remember his number, remained behind a closed door when we tramped out to work.

Monday came, and with it the magistrate. The guilty man was led before him. The trial could not have lasted for more than three short minutes, for almost immediately he slouched, with bowed head, through the garden where I was at work on his way to the cruel, torturing, everlasting night of the punishment cells.

Prison Types.

For man's grim justice goes its way,
And will not swerve aside;
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride.
With iron heel it slays the strong,
The monstrous parricide!

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

The men I met in jail interested me keenly, and, understanding as I did that they were simply the product of the wretched social system which exists, I had no other feeling toward them than that of warm, brotherly sympathy.

They were indeed a motley host, and their alleged offences were wondrously varied. One by one I would pick them out as the warders herded them up like cattle and drove them forth to their daily tasks. There was the smooth-faced young fellow with the kind eyes—the perpetrator of a brutal murder. There was the burly, thick-set, navvy-like man who dug the drain trenches—he was a defaulting bank manager. There was the trembling old Italian who had sold spirits to a sick woman after hours, and muttered in broken English something about having only "three more muns and seben week to do." There was the wild Irishman who

had duffed cattle, and, with an inherent vein of humor that even those awful surroundings could not altogether kill, suggested the formation of a union—the Amalgamated Jail Birds—with a yearly picnic to Clontarf.

Yes, there they were—marching past in heart-rending parade—the garrotter, the bushranger, the house-breaker, the forger, the outrager, the socialist! All manner of crime was represented, the alleged perpetrators counting the hours as they came and dragged away—waiting and longing for the days, the weeks, the months, the years to pass, and then not daring to think of what lay beyond.

In jail life is real, earnest, and joyless. Seldom does the flicker of a smile pass across the face of a man. The atmosphere is permeated with an oppressiveness which gnaws like a canker at the heart of every prisoner. The present is degrading, dehumanising, and the distant future terrible—a future that ever will possess a stigma that in his wildest dreams a man cannot hope to live entirely down.

And so I walked with them, and, when opportunity was afforded me, talked with them and found my way into the innermost recesses of many a broken heart—into the hearts that yearned for sunshine, for freedom, for the clasp of friendly hands and the loving sympathy of other hearts. It took little time for me to overcome their reticence and have them tell Life's tragic tale and some the cause of their imprisonment. But others, who also told Life's tragic tale, proffered no confession of crime, because they had committed none. As I said before, I walked and talked with these men—walked and talked with them inside the prison walls as a fellow convict—walked and talked with them when there was no conventional restrictions, no reason, no desire for any man to hide his soul, but rather an intense longing to pour out his story to a sympathetic fellow sufferer. And thus it came to pass that I learned the dreadful truth:

Of all the prisoners to-day serving sentences in the jails of Australia I am absolutely convinced that at least 30 per cent. are not guilty of the crimes alleged against them. They are there simply because the police, finding themselves called upon to justify their existence and unable to secure the true culprits, have deliberately chosen them as victims. For the poor there is no longer justice. In the Courts of Australia all the evidence in the world could not influence the mind of a Magistrate or Judge in the face of a contrary assertion on the part of a member of the all-powerful Force.

In Goulburn Jail I came into close contact with the "lifers"—that is, men whose death sentence for murder has been commuted to penal servitude for life. They have characteristics peculiarly their own, and in a later publication I intend to deal particularly with them.

My mate in the garden was a "lifer," and a better mate I never wish to have. Gruff in manner, his was the kindest heart that ever beat beneath the breast of either a branded jacket or frock coat. He told me about the crime he had committed—wife murder—and yet every morning that mate of mine, previous to our sweeping the asphalt paths of the garden, used to walk round and pick up the ants and place them back upon the worked soil, and pick up the ladybirds and place them upon the shrubs in order that they might not be mangled by the whalebone brooms.

The "lifers" in Goulburn Jail, and their number seemed legion, appeared to be religious extremists. They took a leading part in the church services, and the devotional fervor they displayed bordered almost on to the fanatical. One day I inquired of one of them the reason of his excess of zeal, and he gave voice to the following logic:

"Well, yer see, I looks at it this way. There might be an 'Eaven and an 'Ell, and there mightn't be. So it stands to reason that if yer religious an' there is an 'Eaven and an 'Ell then you'll be on the right side,

and even if there ain't, well, then yer ain't done yerself no 'arm.'

He paused for a moment, and then, with a sort of despairing gesture, continued:

"Besides, a bloke ain't got no chance to be anything but religious in a damn 'ole like this."

One day I heard a visiting clergyman say to the same "lifer": "Well, Number So and So, how are things going with you?"

Number So and So placed a forefinger significantly against his chin and replied:

"Look 'ere, sir, I'm right full up of it; full right up to 'ere. I can't stand it no longer."

The minister assumed an air of deep commiseration, and said: "But, poor fellow, you must be punished for your sins. It's God's will."

"That's just what I don't understand, sir," answered Number So and So. He suddenly pointed towards the church. "You tell us Sunday after Sunday over there that God is going ter punish us fer our sins by an' by, and 'ere you are backing this crowd up wot's taken upon themselves to do God's work. If it's God's job to punish us, well, leave it to 'Im—but if it's the job of the Comptroller-General of Prisons—well, sir, tell us straight out and let us know jes' how we stand." And the good parson, with a remark about some things being beyond the comprehension of mortal mind, bade a hurried and frowning "Good-day."

Upon one occasion I listened to a young embezzler and a prisoner employed at carpentering in heated argument about the details of certains tasks. The discussion became rather personal, and the carpenter, who seemed to be getting the worst of the deal, suddenly tossed his head in evident disgust and walked off in high dudgeon with the crushing final rejoinder of: "Well, I may be bad enough, but, thank God, anyway, I'm not a thief." This man, who thanked God he was not a thief, had committed no greater crime than to murder his wife and two baby children.

Another time I heard a "lifer" humbly rebuke a warder who was abusively addressing him by saying, "Please, sir, I'd have you remember that I never came 'ere for stealin', nor for tellin' lies neither."

Instance after instance worthy of mention I could relate while touching upon the subject of "lifers," but must hasten on.

Many of the unfortunates I met had loomed large before the public at the time of their trials. In the press the details of their crime had been printed in bold type under glowing headlines, and then they had passed out of sight, out of mind, and though they still lived on, to the world they had become nothing more than a morbid memory.

Conclusion.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

—Ballad of Reading Jail.

A prisoner in jail is often likened to a caged bird, but the allegory is wrong. When a bird is robbed of its freedom, it is petted and pampered, but a prisoner is systematically tortured. As a foremost Judge confessed in an address delivered at the Sydney Town Hall, the whole aim of the jail system of this land is to perpetually impress upon the mind of a prisoner the fact that he is undergoing actual punishment during every moment of his incarceration.

A man or woman is sentenced to six months' imprisonment. He or she is handed to the jailers, and they concentrate their efforts upon changing that six months into a seeming six years. A prisoner in an Australian jail is subjected to a system of rigid regulation, which exists simply in order to be broken and so allow the infliction of additional punishment.

CONCLUSION.

A term in jail cannot improve a man either physically, mentally, or morally. Physically, he deteriorates in consequence of unnatural suppression of action, the vitiated atmosphere of the darksome cell, and the vileness of the regulation diet. Mentally, he suffers from continual oppressiveness, the forced abandonment of initiative, and the nerve-racking tyranny of official watchfulness. And morally he suffers also. A mysterious force, compelling and inherent, drives him to seek converse with his kind. The cast-iron rules of the prison say he must not; but when the opportunity comes he must—surreptitiously. He is detected, and, in danger of dire consequences, he lies. His palate has been trained to appreciate sweetness. The “indulgence” prisoners receive their tiny share of sugar, and he stoops to begging and bartering. He is detected, and lies. He pleads with a more fortunate fellow for the taste of tobacco, and, getting it, is detected, and lies. He lies because something tells him it is no crime to speak, or to eat sugar or smoke tobacco when others give it to him. The very savagery of the laws which govern the jails of Australia have made them a hotbed of lying and knavery. But what though the jail system of Australia makes knaves and tricksters of honest men! After all, it but fulfils its mission. And what is its mission? I will tell you. There are hundreds of thousands of pounds of vested interest represented in the over-supply of jail buildings throughout the land, and it is the mission of the jail system to see that so much invested capital does not fall into disuse.

And, finally, there are myriads and myriads of our fellow-men who go to fill the positions of jail officialdom, and these men know full well that it is to their individual benefit to have a flourishing criminal crop on hand. Clearly it is the mission of the system to maintain, not to lessen, the supply of victims.

And now, reader, I will conclude. In my own humble way I have helped you to understand the mysteries of everyday jail life under the sunny skies of

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JAIL FROM WITHIN.

Australia—a life which absolutely fails as a reformative factor, but serves only to breed bitterness, resentment, and habitual criminality, for only too aptly is its true effect portrayed in those haunting lines of Wilde's:

The vilest deeds, like poison weeds,
Bloom well in prison air;
It's only what is good in man
That wastes and withers there;
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the warder is Despair.

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The Worker Print, St. Andrew's Place, Sydney.